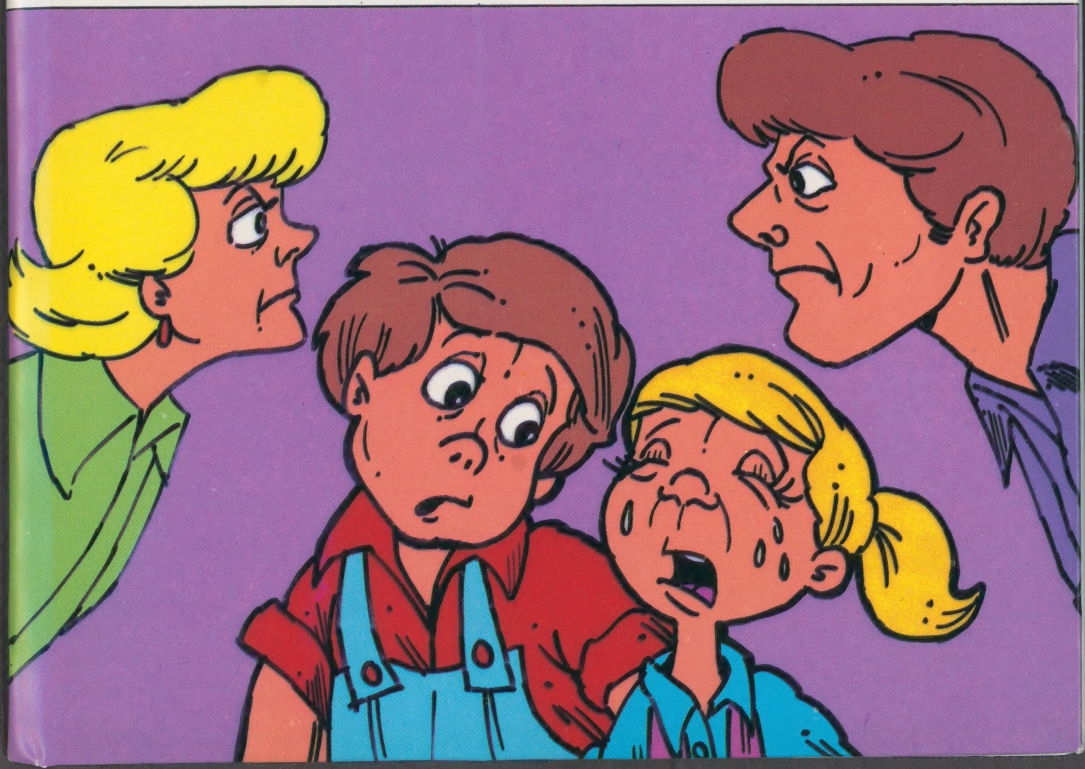
Tele-Story presents

STRAIGHT TALK for KIDS™

DIVORCE

through the eyes of a child



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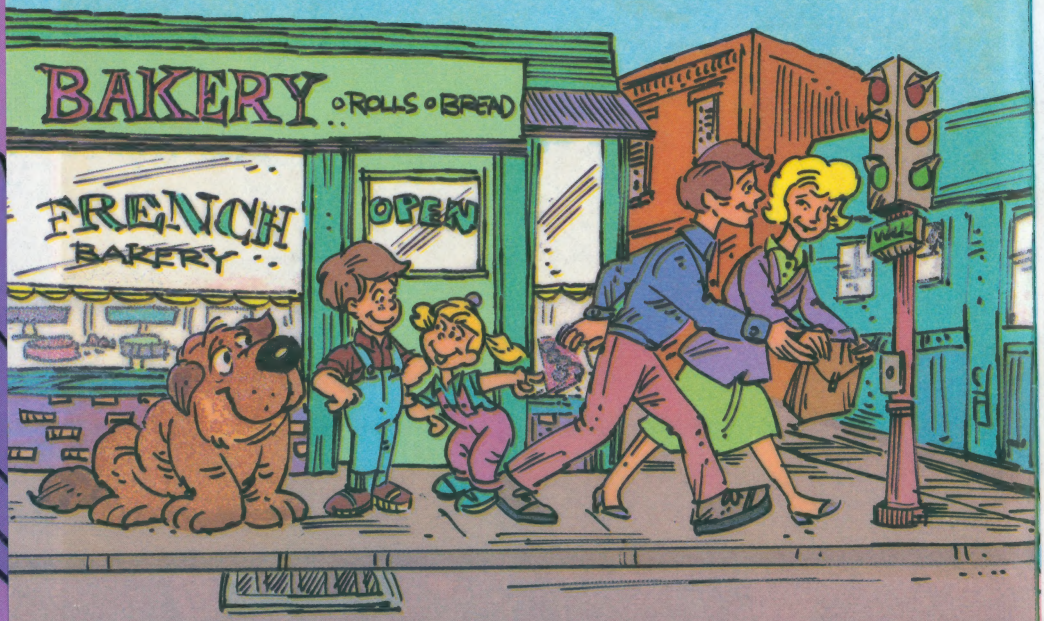


Tele-Story®
presents

DIVORCE

through the eyes of a child

Design & Illustrations by
JACK WHITE & GAY LAWRENCE

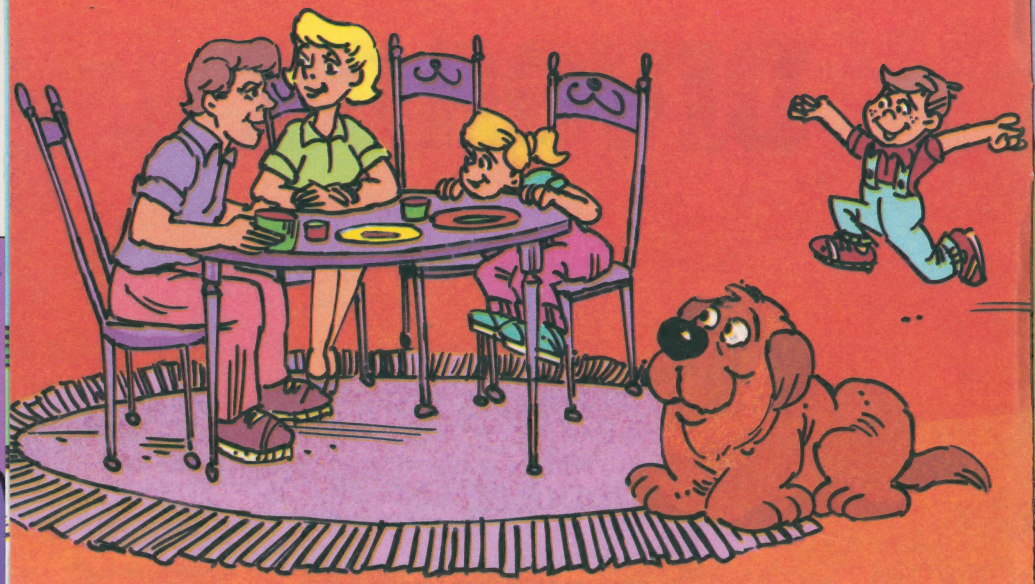
Written by
JODIE LEWIS

Produced by
JEFF EHRHART

Music by
JAN STEVEN PROSTICK

Executive Producer
RONALD NEWSWANDER

SUPERSCOPE ®



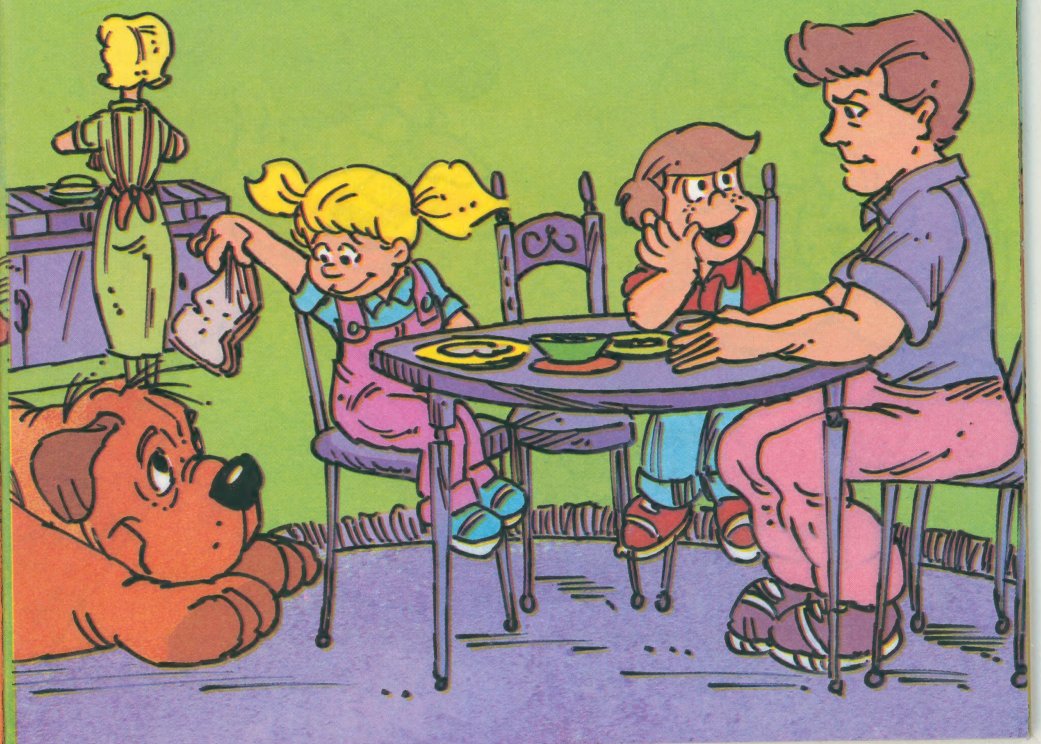
Breakfast was always Mike's favorite part of the day. He'd get dressed real fast and hurry to the kitchen so he could listen to his dad talk about his work. Mike's dad was a construction boss and that's what Mike wanted to be.

"How tall is the new building gonna be, Dad?"

"Oh, this is going to be a big one. Fourteen stories with a helicopter pad on the roof."

"A helicopter pad! Wow!!"

No one noticed Mike's little sister Kelly feeding her breakfast to Barnaby, the family dog, until his big, wet nose knocked her plate from the table with a crash!



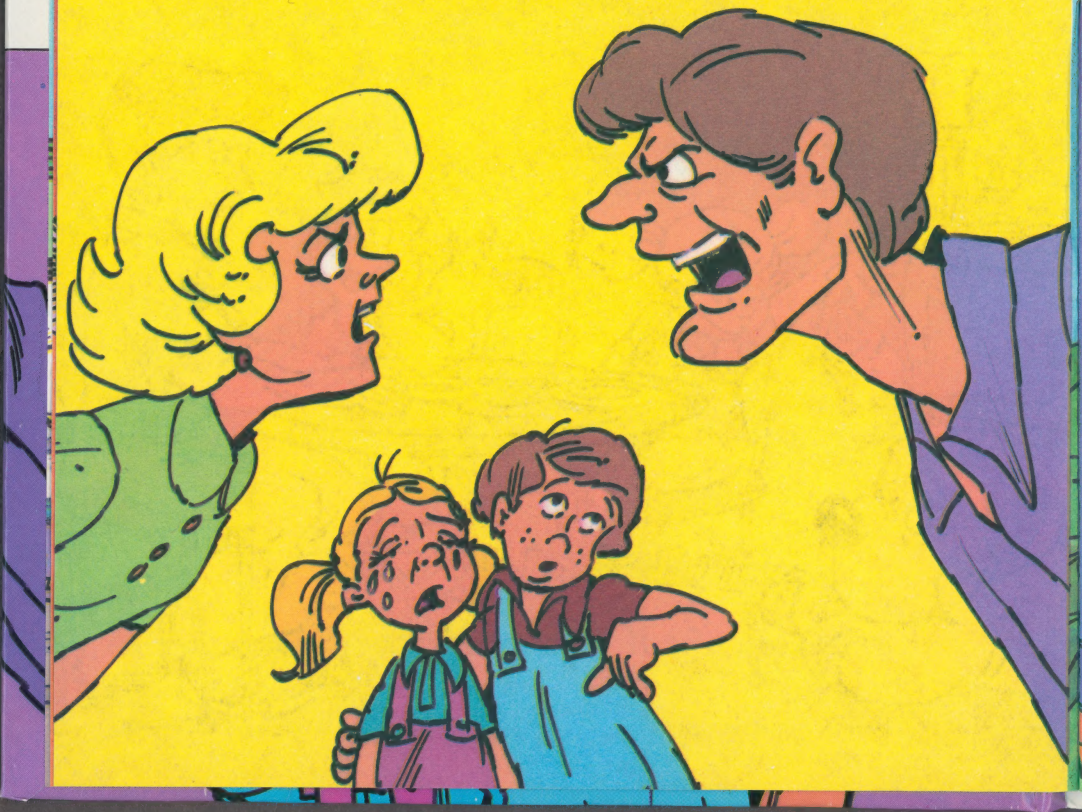
Everyone was startled and turned to look at the mess on the floor.

"I didn't drop it, Mommy. Barnaby did."

Mike's mom looked angrily at his dad.

"Why weren't you watching her?"

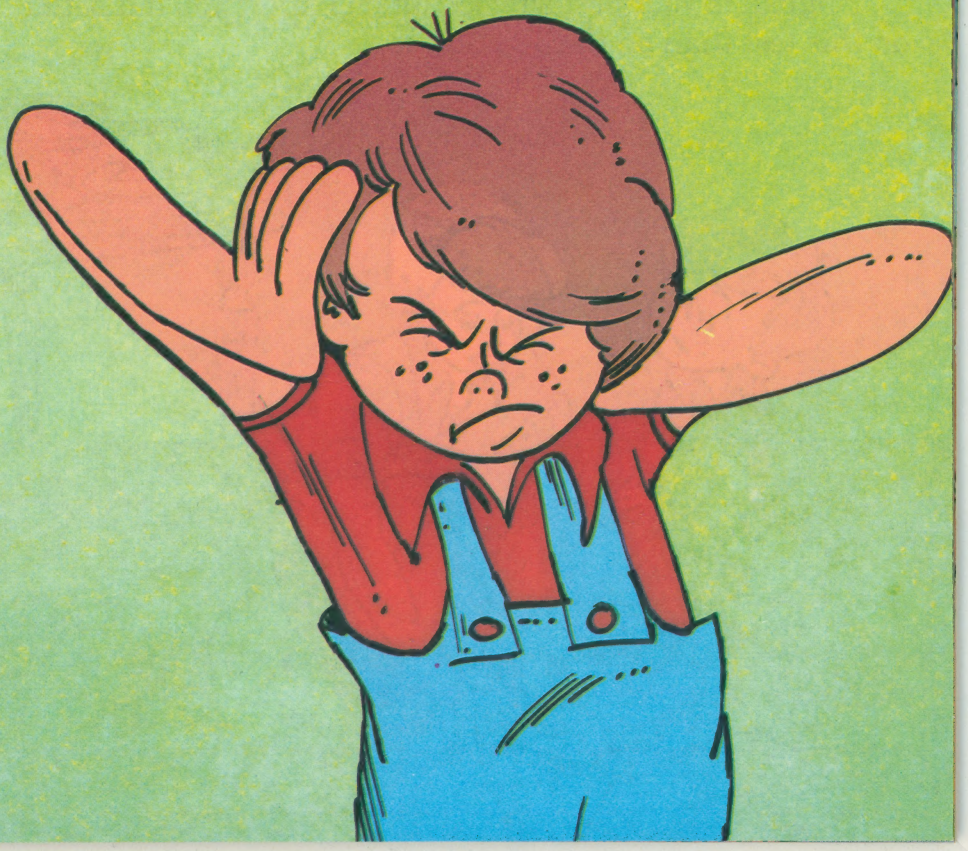
"I can't watch her every minute. And I've told you not to let Barnaby in while we're eating!"



"Don't you blame this on me like everything else."

Mike wanted to run from the room, but he sat and covered his ears. He hated it when his parents argued. That's all they seemed to do lately. Finally, Mike's dad got up from the table.

"I'm leaving for work."



Mike always felt guilty when his parents fought. Maybe he should have been watching Kelly.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I'll clean it up."

"No, I'll do it. You'll be late for school. You're getting your English test back today, right?"

"I guess."

"English is your best subject, Mike. I know you did better on this test than on the others."

Mike left for school feeling very worried. He knew he didn't do well on his English test. He was so deep in thought he didn't hear his friend Kevin call out to him.

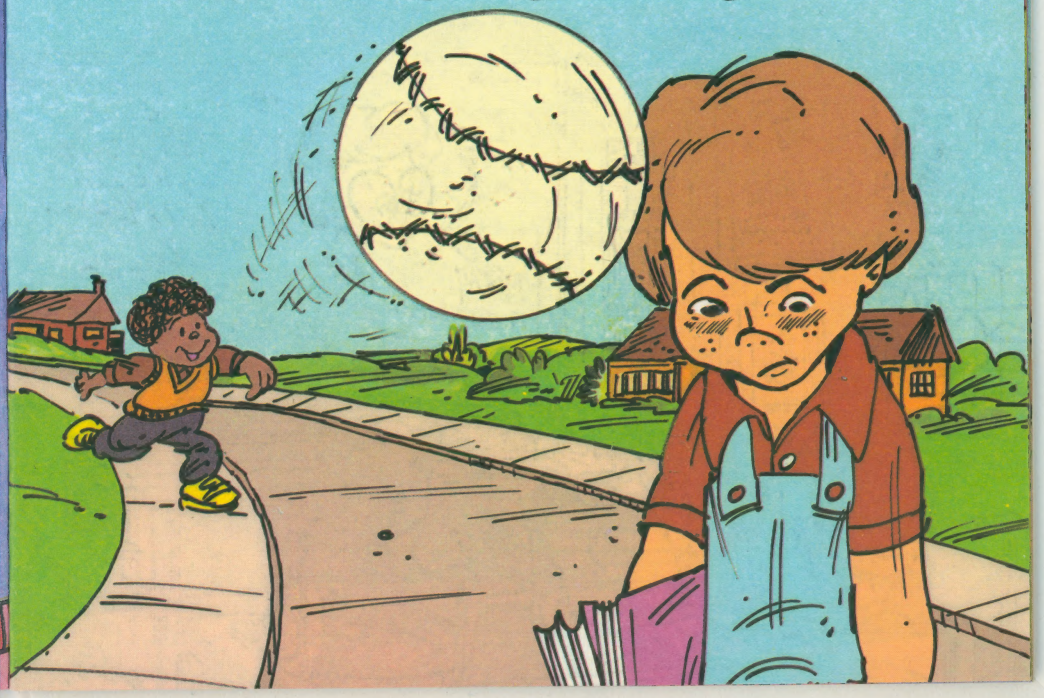
"Hey, Mike! Catch!"

Kevin threw his baseball, but Mike wasn't ready and missed it. The ball bounced into the street.

"Hey man, your game's gettin' real bad. What's with you lately?"

"Nothin'."

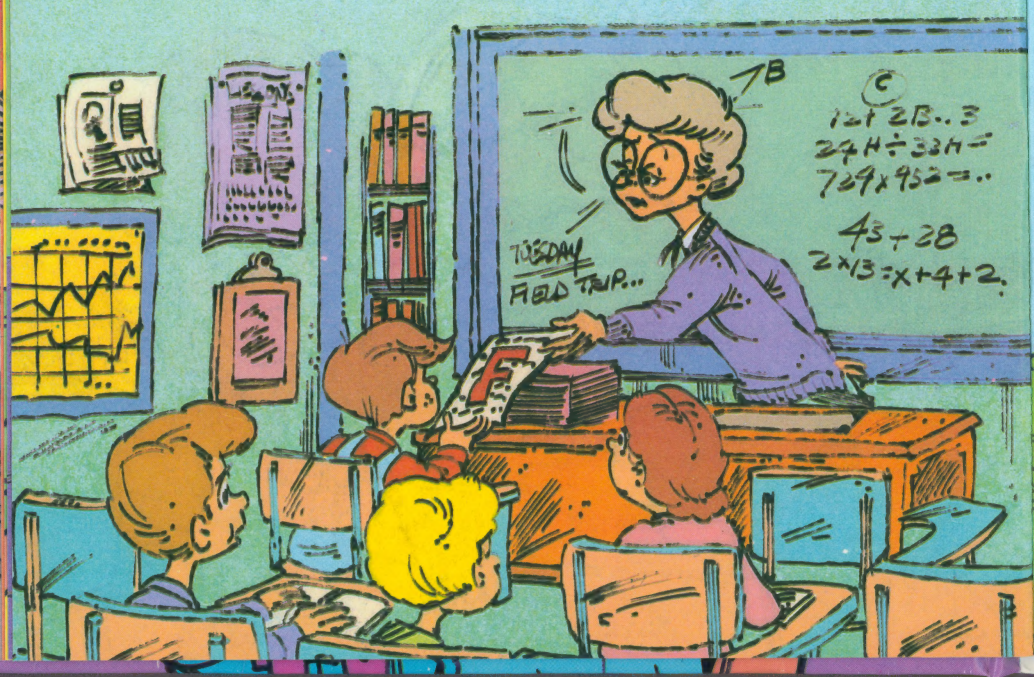
"Well, you're sure acting strange for nothing."



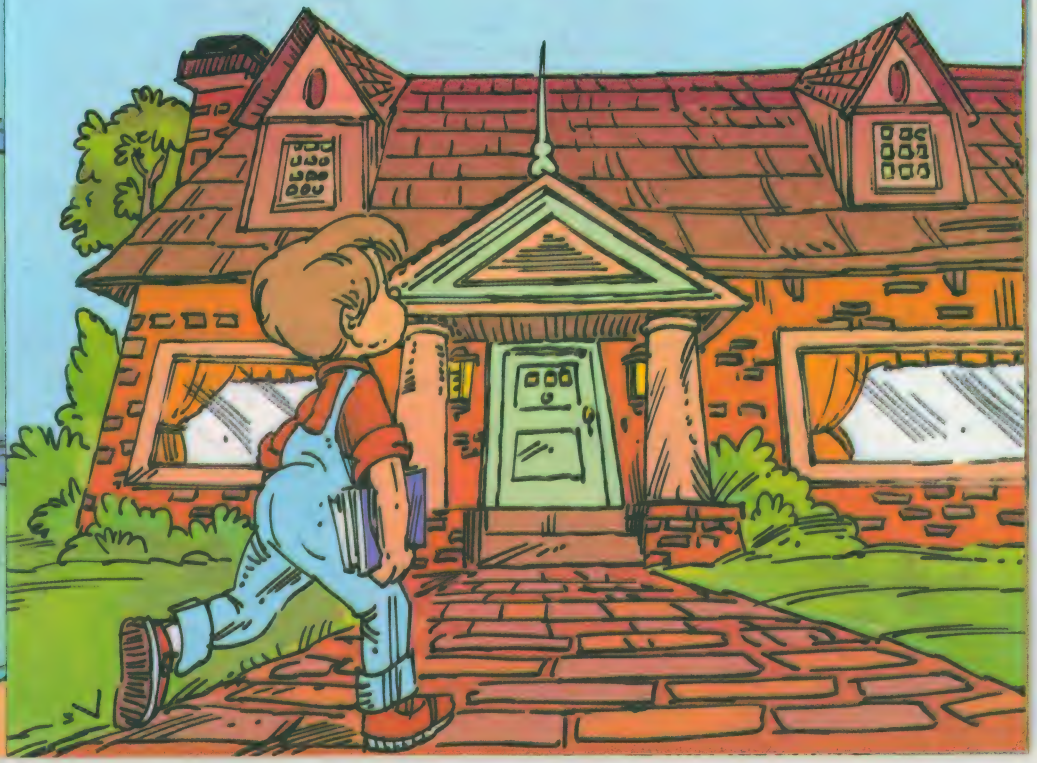
After lunch, Mike's teacher passed out the test papers. When she handed Mike his test, it had a big red F on it.

"I'm really surprised at you, Mike. You're such a good student. Is something wrong?"

Mike couldn't answer. He felt so alone, not understanding his mixed-up feelings about his parent's arguing and how scared it made him.



When Mike came home, he couldn't find anyone.
"Hey, Mom, Kelly, I'm home!"
"Come upstairs, Mike. Kelly's with me."
Wondering what was going on, Mike walked upstairs.



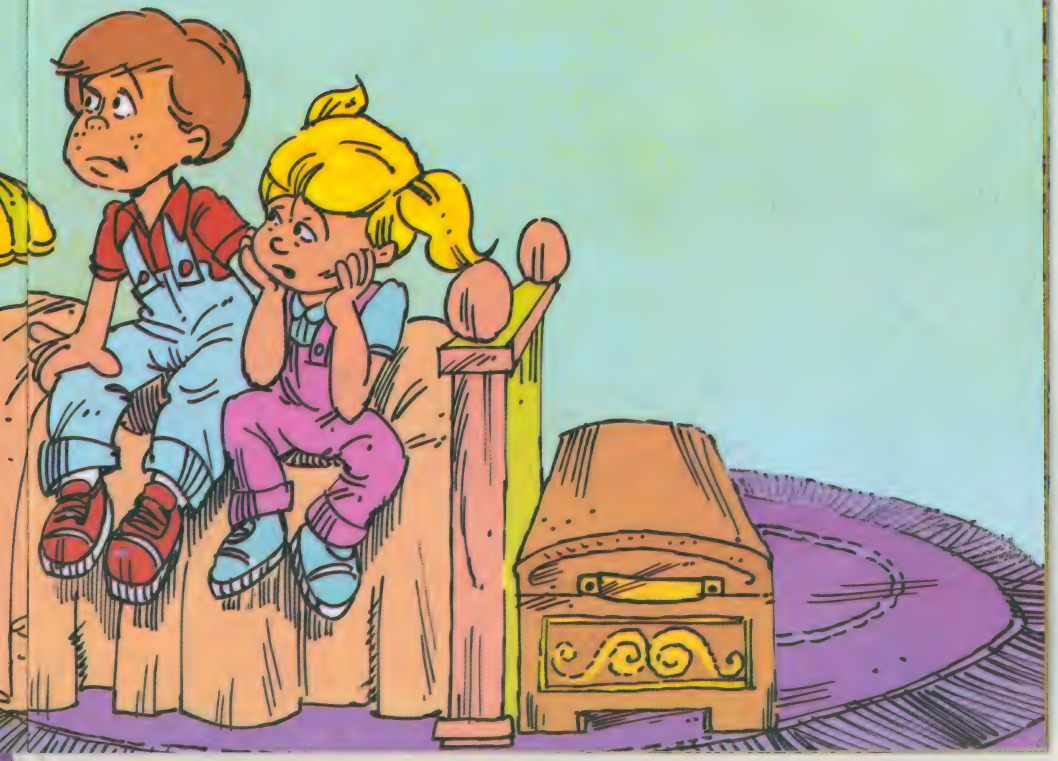
"Sit down, Mike. I have something to tell you and Kelly."

Mike saw that his mom had been crying and he started feeling scared again. He sat on the bed next to Kelly.

"Your dad and I have had a talk and…well, we decided we can't be married anymore."

"Why?"

"Sometimes married couples don't get along anymore. The love goes away. We're getting a divorce, and Dad is going to live somewhere else."



Mike felt his whole world shatter. Tears rolled down his cheeks.

"But I don't want you to get a divorce. I don't want Dad to move away."

"It can't be helped. You're going to have to be the man of the house now."

"Mommy, are you mad at Daddy?"

"In a way, Kelly."

"If it's 'cause I haven't been getting good grades, I'll study harder. I promise. And I'll clean my room without being asked and…"

"I'm sorry, Mike, this is the way it has to be."

That night Mike's dad got ready to leave.

"You kids be good now. I'll talk to you soon."

"Don't go, Dad. I don't know how to be the man of the house."

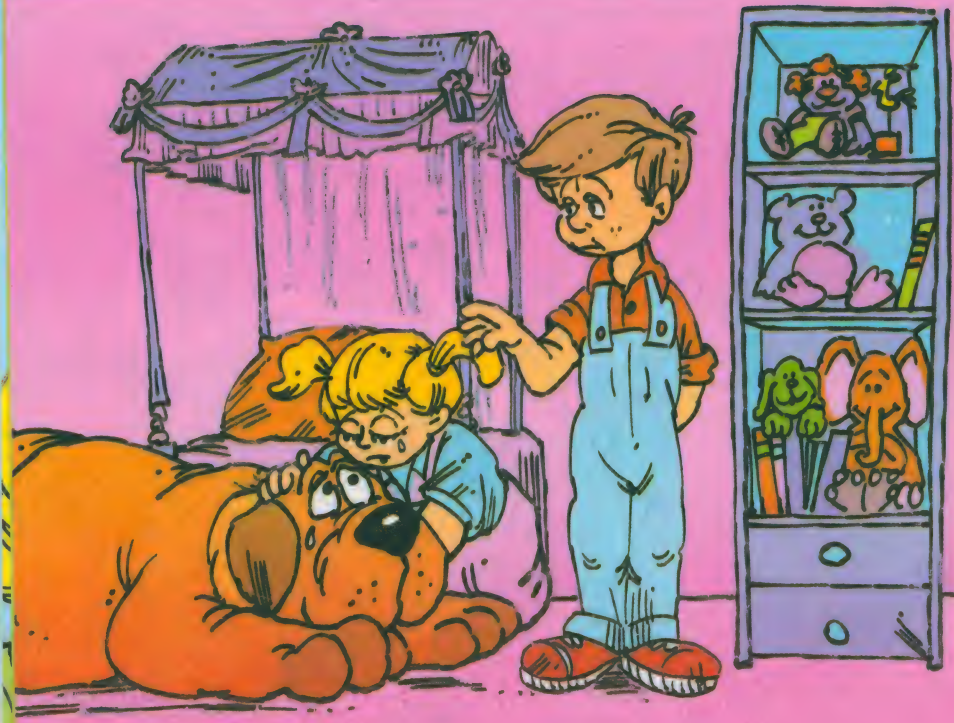
"You'll be fine."

Mike watched his dad leave, thinking he'd never feel fine ever again.

The next morning Mike wasn't in his usual hurry to get to the breakfast table. When he opened his door he heard his mom call up to him.

"Mike, would you help get Kelly ready for nursery school?"

"Okay."



Mike knocked on Kelly's door, opening it when he heard muffled sniffles. He found Kelly sitting on the floor, crying into Barnaby's soft coat.

"What's wrong, Kelly?"

"I miss Daddy. And I wet my bed."

Mike tried to comfort his sister. Then he helped her get dressed and brought her downstairs with Barnaby galloping behind.

Everyone ate breakfast in silence and didn't notice when Kelly gave hers to Barnaby.

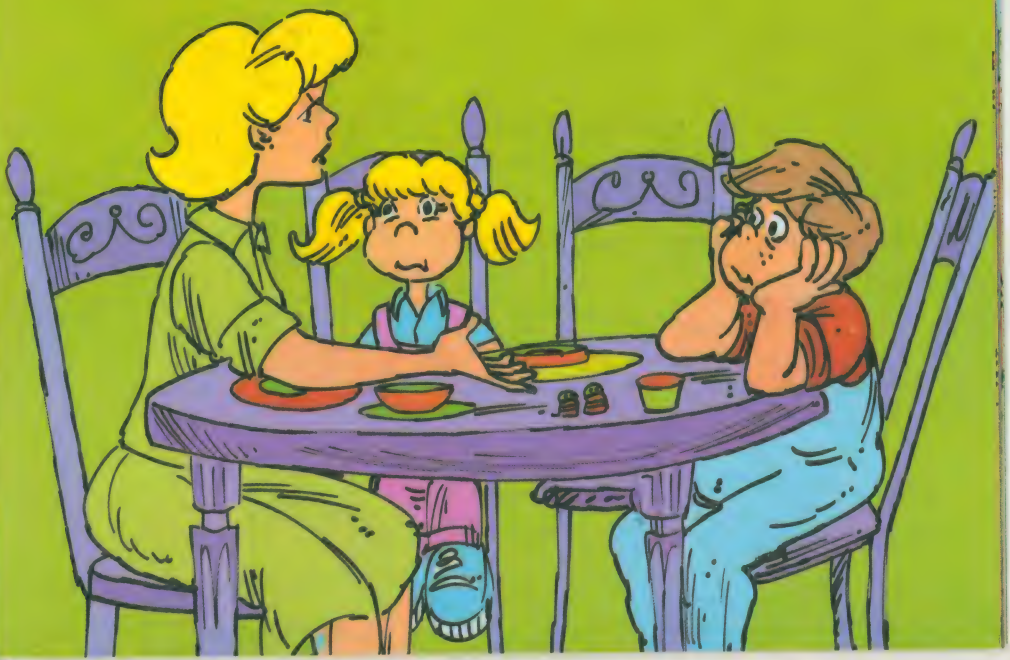
"What's gonna happen, Mom?"

"For one thing, I'll have to get a job. It'll mean I'll need your help around the house and with Kelly."

"She wet her bed last night."

"I didn't mean to, Mommy."

It had been two years since Kelly had stopped wetting her bed so her mom was surprised.



Mike found it impossible to concentrate at school. When recess came, he didn't want to play baseball with his friends.

"C'mon, Mike. You're the best pitcher."

"I don't feel like playing, Kevin."

"You're a real drag, you know, Mike? We're gonna lose and it'll be your fault."

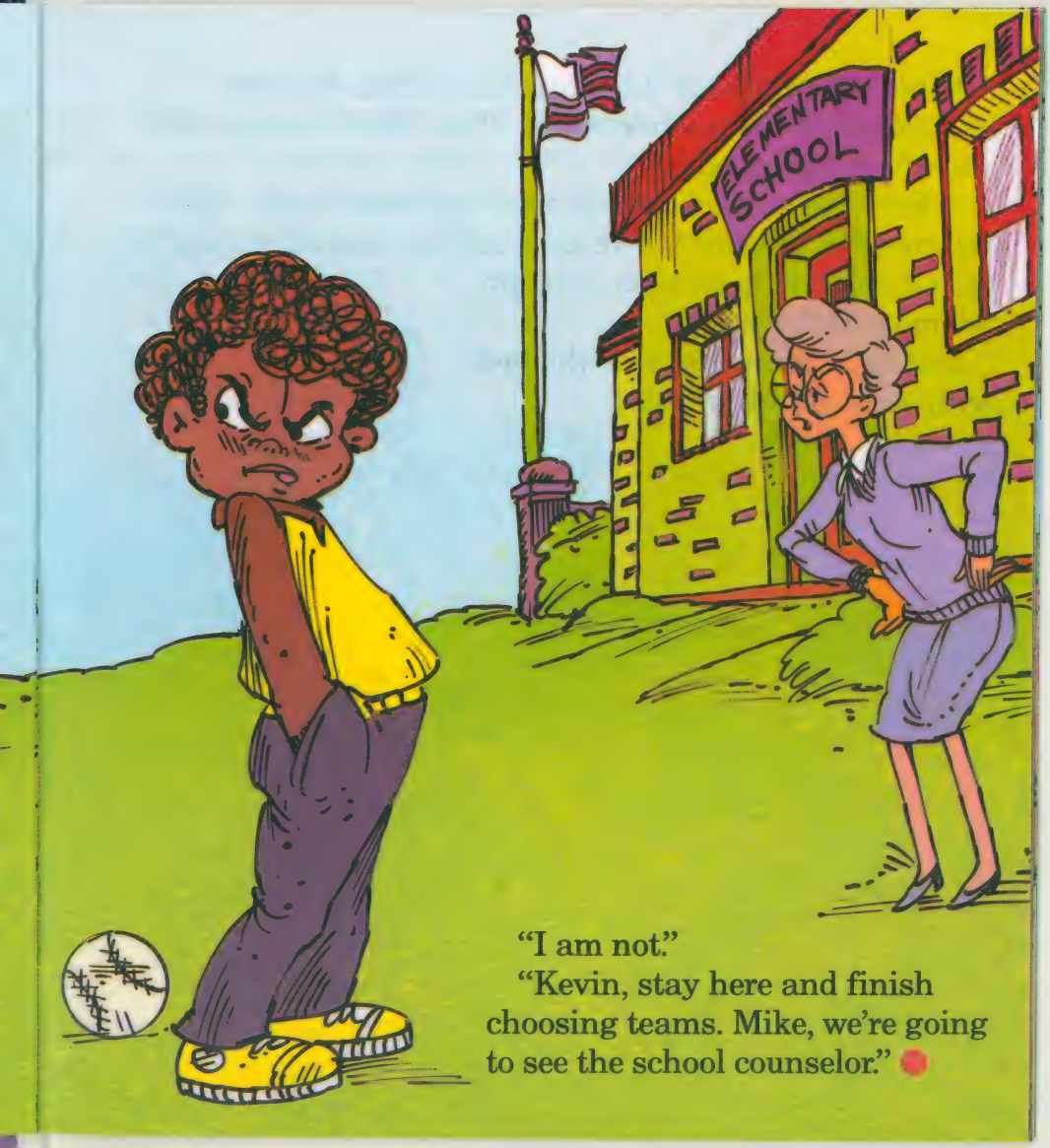
"If you play and lose, Kevin, it'll be your fault."

"Oh, yeah?!"

Mike's teacher overheard the argument and walked over.

"What's going on here?"

"Mike's gonna make our team lose."



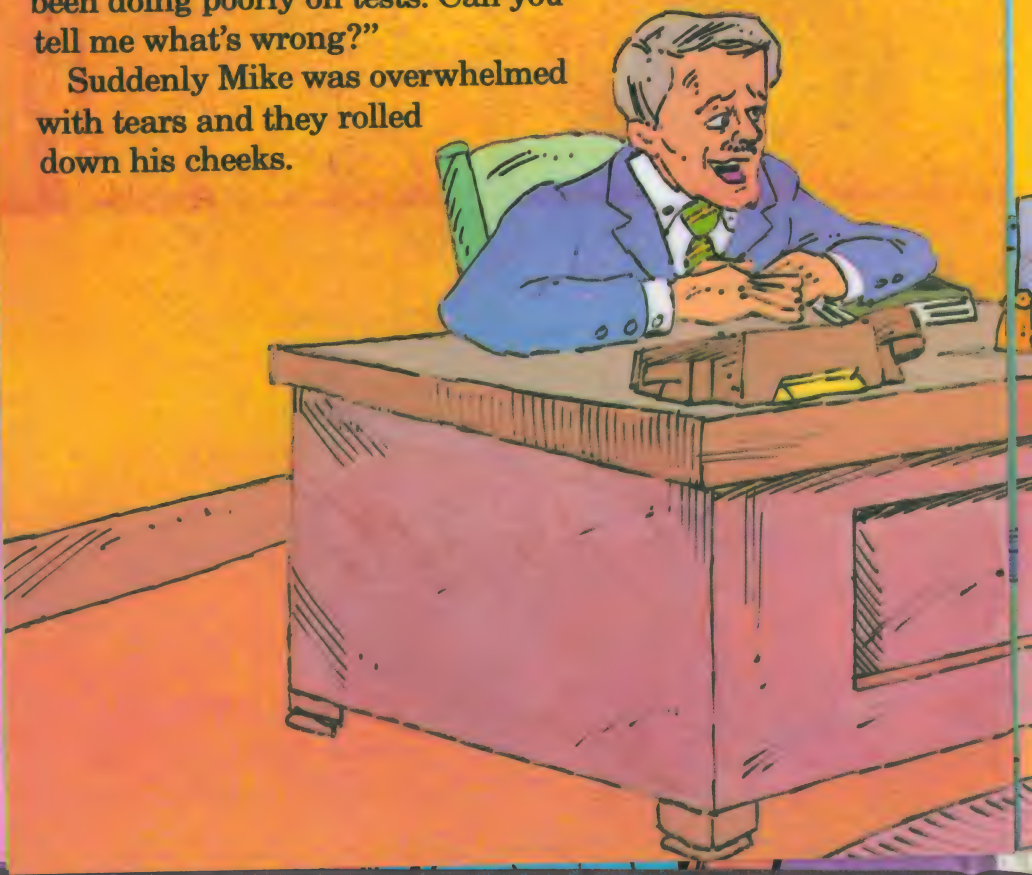
"I am not."

"Kevin, stay here and finish choosing teams. Mike, we're going to see the school counselor."

Mike waited outside the counselor's office while the counselor and his teacher talked. Then Mike's teacher left and Mike was called in.

"I hear you've been having some problems lately, Mike. Your teacher tells me you're an excellent student but you've been doing poorly on tests. Can you tell me what's wrong?"

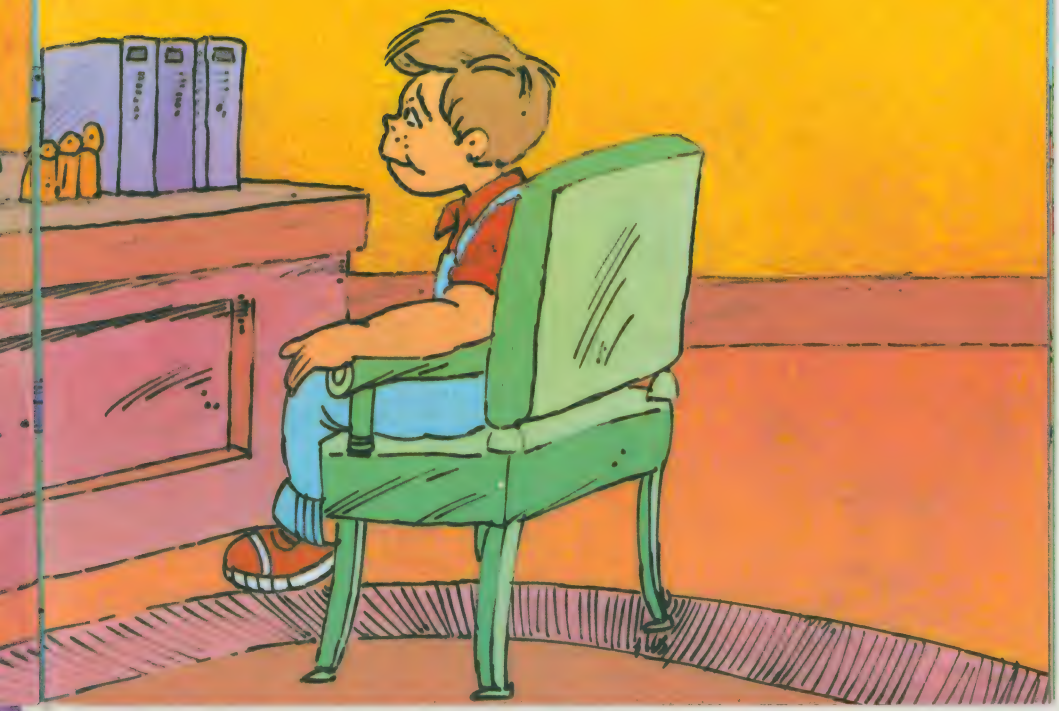
Suddenly Mike was overwhelmed with tears and they rolled down his cheeks.



"My parents are getting a divorce. It's all my fault."

"Mike, I'm sorry to hear your parents are divorcing, but why do you think it's your fault?"

"I don't do my homework sometimes, and my room's a mess. I don't stop Kelly from feeding her breakfast to Barnaby. That's our dog."



"It's not your fault, Mike. Children can't make parents divorce each other. Only parents can decide those things."

"Mom said now I'm the man of the house and I don't know how to be."

"You've got a lot of growing up to do before you can be the man of the house. I think your mom meant she needs you more now. Have you told her how you feel?"

"No. I haven't told anyone. No one would understand."

"You're not alone, Mike. Unfortunately a lot of children's parents are divorced."

"Really?"

"Yes, and they all have the same mixed-up feelings. But you can feel better if you talk to your mom and let her help you."

"Okay. I'll talk to her."

Mike hurried home to talk to his mom, only to find out that Kelly and Barnaby had run away. Mike's mom was very upset and she even called Mike's Dad to come over. Then Mike remembered a special place that Kelly had told him about once and he decided to look for her there.

Kelly liked to play house between two overgrown bushes in a nearby field. When Mike looked there, he saw Barnaby's tail wagging through the growth and Kelly snuggled close to the dog's warmth.

"Kelly, why did you run away? Mom's real worried. She even called Dad to come over."

"I dropped my milk and Mommy got mad. When Mommy got mad at Daddy, he went away. I don't want Mommy to send me away, too."

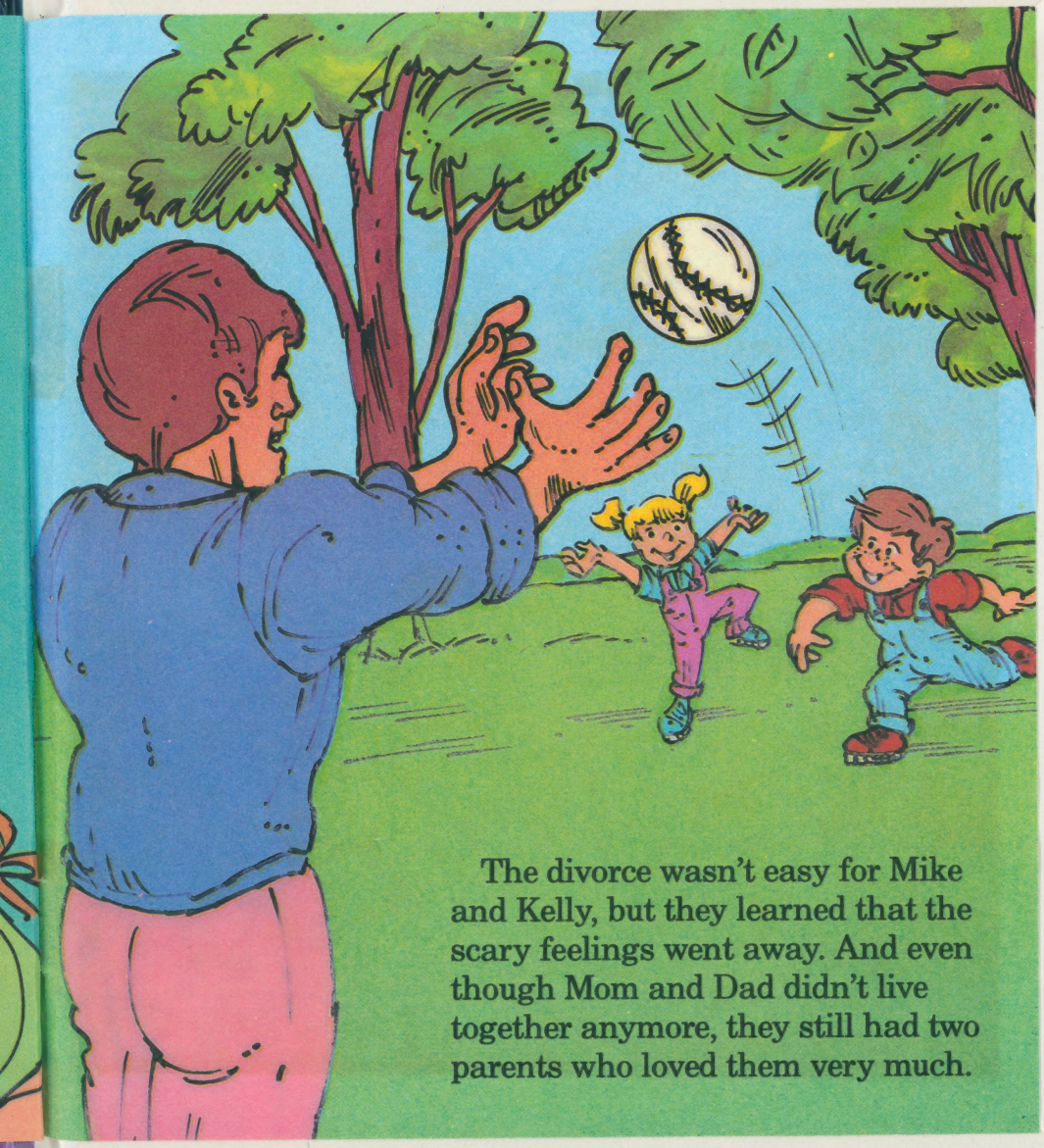
Mike remembered what the counselor said about his feelings and realized that Kelly had mixed-up feelings, too.

Mike put his arms around Kelly and held her close.

"Let's go home, Kelly, and tell Mom and Dad how we feel. They can't help us if they don't know what's wrong."

Mike's dad was there when they returned. They hugged Kelly, then scolded her for running away. Then both parents listened while Mike and Kelly told them about their mixed-up feelings. Now they understood why Mike's grades were falling and why Kelly had wet her bed.

"I'm glad you both told us how you felt. Just remember, when parents divorce, they don't divorce their children. Both your Daddy and I love you very much, and we'll always take care of you."



The divorce wasn't easy for Mike and Kelly, but they learned that the scary feelings went away. And even though Mom and Dad didn't live together anymore, they still had two parents who loved them very much.

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